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FACTS ABOUT WOODLAKE COMMUNITY

Department of Agriculture
Farm Security Administration

OFFICIAL NAME: Woodlake Community

LOCATION: In southeastern Texas, in the center of Trinity County, 6 miles east of Groveton, 150 miles southeast of Dallas and 100 miles north of Houston.

NUMBER OF UNITS: 100 houses each with combination garage, wash house and chicken house.

HISTORY OF PROJECT: The Woodlake Community was initiated by the Texas Relief Administration in January, 1934 and chartered under the Texas Rural Communities, Inc. It was placed under the direction of the Resettlement Administration July 15, 1935, and is now under the jurisdiction of the Farm Security Administration.

PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT: An agricultural community, the Woodlake project was designed to assist the rehabilitation of destitute families who were selected from the relief rolls of nearby cities and who constitute a permanent relief problem. The project has been used more recently for the resettlement of drought-stricken families from the Dust Bowl region.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The project has been constructed on a 1,755 acre cut-over timber tract which includes a 1,200 acre community farm and 225 acre park. The soil is fine and sandy in texture and practically all common vegetables, berries and fruits may be grown successfully. Community structures include two administration buildings, community building, creamery, dairy barn, cowshed, cannery, implement shed, mule barn, corn crib, post house, men's work shop, pump house, general garage and home economics building. The project arrangement follows a French agricultural village layout in which the community center is encircled by the dwellings which in turn are surrounded by the farm land. More than 7 miles of roads serve the project. Water is supplied by a deep well, pump house, pumping machinery and a distributing system. Individual septic tank systems dispose of sewage. Electricity and telephone are available but there is no gas.

HOUSE DESCRIPTION: Ten three-room, 50 four-room and 40 five-room houses have been constructed on 100 fenced homesites, each 3 acres in size. Ninety-two houses are of frame and 8 of log construction. There are no basements. All dwellings rest on brick foundations and have outside brick chimneys. Outbuildings include combination barn, wash house and chicken house.

HOMESTEADERS: All normally working adult members of families originally in occupancy at Woodlake were unemployed and taken from relief rolls when moved to the project. The majority of these families were selected by the Texas Relief Administration from the unemployed workers in Houston. While only a few had farming experience, all family heads were given work by the Resettlement Administration in the construction and clearing of the project. Many family heads whose experience was in the trade and industrial pursuits were able to leave the project after this period of rehabilitation, and have returned to the urban areas. These original homesteads have been gradually replaced by low-income farm families and, early in 1937, about 30 families from the Dust Bowl region have taken up homesites.